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Pseudo-conflicts in intercultural ESO (Mandatory Secondary Education) classroom from the point of view of students and teachers.

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Abstract

A diverse cultural world involves divergences and conflicts, which could be solutions more than problems (Cascón, 2000) if addressed properly. This study analyzes pseudo-conflicts in intercultural classrooms, using two questionnaires to study teachers' and students' points of view (Olmedo *et.al.*, 2012). A descriptive and correlational data analysis facilitates conclusions about students' and teachers' agreement about the most serious conflicts or behaviors and disagreement on others, which can lead to confusion in coexistence. Although related xenophobic or sexist latent-conflicts are closely watched by teachers, sometimes not enough attention is paid to pseudo-conflicts, which can impact intercultural coexistence negatively.

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1. Introduction

Today's world presents us with pluralism in which diversity can be a source of growth and mutual enrichment for people. The coexistence of immigrant and native students is a reality within the current educational system. Living on these environments involves contrasts, where differences, disputes and conflicts are the norm. Europe is becoming more ethnically heterogeneous (Giddens, 2009), which is generating new social cultural scenes and

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consequently new educational contexts. Coexistence sometimes produces conflicting relationships and therefore educational tools are required to help resolve conflicts positively caused by this new coexistence in a positive way.

The majority of specialists in the field of Intercultural Education (Aguado, 2003; Ortega et.al. 2008; Essomba, 2007; Santos, 2008; Soriano, 2008) indicate that disputes arising from the coexistence of different cultures in the school context can be positive, when the resolution is guided by respect, dialogue and recognition of others' points of view. It is important to note that conflicts in educational multicultural contexts, have traditionally been generated by different uses of communication, non-shared discipline rules and divergent classroom atmosphere models. Jordan (2007) developed a dialoguing and participation culture framework, which supports participating students to resolve their own conflicts resulting in a positive influence on coexistence and school climate.

Other models which address this problem originate in a socio-cultural approach, opening what specialists call a Third Space (Gutierrez, 2002, 2008; Gutierrez, Rogoff, 2003; Larson, 2007). This is a hypothetical space where several ways of seeing the world can mix, as well as different learning styles and strategies, to reach an intermediate negotiation point, but where participants can maintain something of themselves and without being assimilated into the other culture (Bhabha, 1994). Third Space offers a means to reach an intermediate line between two or more cultures to meet each other, develop a new relationship framework and find new respectful learning strategies. For teachers this means using different knowledge to prevent discord between different collectives.

The Third Space, produced through the interaction of students during the teaching-learning process and their interaction, generates three fundamental aspects of the classroom atmosphere (Vistrain, 2009): it expands the students' learning process, allows making references to their own knowledge, and generates cultural hybridity.

In this research, the concept of Third Space refers to the opportunity offered by the analysis of conflicts as a negotiation process to improve interethnic relations in the classroom. It is an opportunity that opens and expands horizons, ideas and relationships. Relevant intercultural negotiation includes effective adaptation strategies, involves listening to others, and gives students an opportunity for self-expression (Hannula, 2001).

However, not each disagreement is a conflict (Cascón, 2000). Conflicts, based on the analysis of their causes, can be classified into three types: pseudo conflicts, latent conflicts and actual conflicts. A pseudo conflicts exists when the interests and needs of people are in reality not in conflict or antagonistic. Despite a clash in tone among participants, there is no real deeper problem. Reestablishing communication between participants is enough to resolve the situation.

Latent conflicts are probably the most common, although there is no actual confrontation. This is due to the fact that either party perceives it as conflict of interest, needs or values, or they are not able to face a conflict for lack of strength or consciousness. This does not mean, however that latent conflicts do not exist (Cascón, 2000). Commonly, these types of conflict are not attended to at school, to avoid a crisis or to prevent a backlash. When they involve a resolution to a latent conflict, there is often much to do. The damage to relationships and the feelings of people can be so acute that more complex forms of intervention are required. Inadequate communication, misunderstandings, misperceptions and forced interpretations, cause latent conflicts to have the same impact as a real conflict. The expressions and forms of resolution can be equally severe in both types of conflict.

A school collective should not ignore the absence of visible manifestations of conflict. They ought to face conflict proactively and become a factor in the improvement of coexistence. The best way to do this is to have a positive view of conflict, considering diversity and difference as an asset and a source of mutual enrichment (Junta de Andalucía, 2010). According to the Transcend Method (Galtung, 2003), processing conflict so as to benefit all involved parties must situate a positive and constructive resolution around the value of Peace. Therefore, empathy, creativity and non-violence are the most significant features associated with this technique. It conceives conflict in a positive or negative way depending on how these values are adhered to. The last occur on a theoretical and subconscious level, and to become evident they require an awareness process such as Freire's methodology, turning conflicts in to educational awareness experiences.

We consider that education for a positive coexistence involves managing pseudo conflicts in a climate of dialogue which creates positive intercultural coexistence. Intervening during the first pseudo conflict stages without waiting for the crisis to develop, will encourage students to use strategies and skills to overcome conflict positively without reaching stage of violence (Galtung, 1988). Additionally, it is necessary to heed and evaluate the perception of all collectives involved, teachers, students and families.

The majority of research in this field (Alvarez Garcia et. al., 2007) suggests that from students' point of view, the most common violence occurs from teachers towards students. Therefore students indicate that conflicts are more common when they are "victims" (Ceballos *et.al.*, 2012). Also, this type of conflict triggered by teachers produces the worst negative reaction among students.

On this work, we ask about how pseudo conflicts impinge on the atmosphere of an intercultural secondary education classroom from the point of view of teachers and pupils. We aim to identify the most important conflicts in order to train and advise teachers to use this information to improve classroom relationships. Our initial hypothesis is that a positive correlation between how teachers and students assess the importance of pseudo conflicts will promote resolution and improve the classroom climate.

2. Methodology

2.1. Population and Sampling procedure

The study's participants were chosen from the students and teachers from multicultural high schools in the Autonomous Region of Andalusia, in southern Spain. This is one of the areas with the greatest flow of immigration towards Europe, as it is a border between two continents with the many ethnicities and cultural differences from Africa and Europe.

The procedure included a sample selection by cluster process to select groups/classes with a minimum of 15% of immigrant students. We collected data from the whole amount of 877 subjects (767 students+110 teachers). Of the students, 12.31% were immigrants and 87.68 were native Spanish. These students 393 were female (51.2%), 374 were male (48.8%), and all of them were aged between 11 and 16 years. Of the teachers, 73 (66.4%) were female and 37 (32.7%) were males.

2.2. Instruments for data collection

The instruments used to collect data about coexistence in classrooms were two validated and reliable questionnaires (Berrocal, Olmedo, & Olmos, 2013) to identify situations usually ignored or mismanaged, which produce a large number of conflicts in the classroom.

The students' version of the Questionnaire to assess Coexistence in Secondary Intercultural Classrooms has 48 items grouped into 6 blocks. The first one collects socio-demographic data and the other five ask participants to indicate how they consider each situation presented in the classroom. It uses a scale from 1 (conduct nothing serious), 2 (bit serious), 3 (serious) to 4 (very serious), which prevents intermediate values and requires a positive or negative selection on each item. The items try to identify pseudo conflicts grouped into general violence, psychological, physical and structural violence (disrespect, abuse, exclusion, rumors, assaults and fights), disruption in the classroom (murmurs, scattered attention, unnecessary disruption, cell phone use, tardiness, etc.), discipline problems, bullying or being bullied (direct or indirect bullying, social exclusion, name-calling, harassment, damage to property of the victim, etc.) and absenteeism and dropping out (not going to class, sporadic-attendance, ongoing late arrivals). The questionnaire has validity AFE on a SEM model adjusted to five factors, being the RMSEA of 0.085, NFI and CFI of 0.809 0.789. Its reliability by Cronbach's Alpha 0.717 indicates an acceptable level.

The teachers' version of the Questionnaire to assess Coexistence in Secondary Intercultural Classrooms maintains the same 6 block structure as the students' version. The first block identifies socio demographic data and the following 43 items assess class situation using the same assessment scales.

Both instruments were applied during classroom time in twenty different high schools, located in a border area of 450 km between Europe and Africa. All subjects were asked to answer sincerely and were guaranteed absolute confidentiality of all collected data.

3. Data analysis and outcomes

Before inferential analysis of the data, descriptive statistics were used to explore each item of both questionnaires, with the data subsequently being used to examine the hypothesis.

Comparison of the immigrant students and the autochthonous (native Spanish) students with test T student, allows us to find significant differences in the valuation of the many rules' class: Being late ($p=0.002$), spoiling material ($p=0.003$), eating in class (0.009), and listening to music ($p=0.006$).

The pseudo conflict in the intercultural atmosphere most seriously assessed by students was disrespect ($x = 3.46$), which related to the teacher being threatening, insulting and confronting / her ($x = 3.45$, $x = 3.45$ and $x = 3.43$). On the other hand, students considered less serious all incidents relating to going to the toilet ($x = 2.09$), early collecting ($x = 2.17$) or general disorder on leaving the classroom ($x = 2.18$).

Teachers consider as the most serious pseudo conflicts threats ($x = 3.72$), insults ($x = 3.71$), clashes ($x = 3.64$) between teachers and students or between classmates including xenophobic behaviors ($x = 3.62$). Less serious pseudo conflicts named by teachers were about going to the toilet ($x = 2.17$), scramble attitude ($x = 2.40$), being late ($x = 2.41$) or eating in class ($x = 2.42$).

Teachers evaluated conflicts with a level of severity as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Responses frequencies by teachers after some usual pseudo conflicts.

Common pseudo conflicts list	% responses by teachers				
	Speaking reprimand to students	Behaviour disciplinary report	Negative point assessment record	Remind class rules	Others
Untidy attitude	73.7	3.5	14.0	1.8	7.1
Being late	69.2	10.3	7.7	11.5	1.3
Scramble going out	74.6	8.5	15.3	1.7	0
Early collecting	72.5	4.3	11.6	2.9	8.6
Getting without permission	64.2	16.4	10.4	0	9
Speaking out of turn	61.0	18.2	11.7	6.5	2.6
Forgetting to bring materials	51.3	16.7	16.7	1.3	14.2
Forgetting homework	50.0	3.6	23.8	3.6	19.1
Poor hygiene	65	12	0	2.5	12.5
Comments vexatious	46.8	21.3	10.6	4.3	17.1
Avoiding working	62.3	6.5	9.1	6.5	15.6
Arguing with peers	40.9	30.3	18.2	1.5	9
Spoiling furniture	64.9	21.6	9.5	1.4	2.8
Not paying attention to the teacher	53.4	12.3	15.1	1.4	17.9
Noises and screams	50	27	13.5	4.1	5.5
Missing class	56.5	10.1	7.2	7.2	18.8
Disturbing peers at work	36.0	34.7	13.3	2.7	13.3
Not following rules	21	58.1	6.5	3.2	11.2
Going out without permission	38.6	36.8	7.0	3.5	14.1
Fighting with peers	26.8	50.7	9.9	0	12.6
Disrespect	19.0	63.5	7.9	0	9.6
Sexist behaviour	34.0	38.3	12.8	6.4	8.5
Arguing with teacher	22.2	51.1	4.4	2.2	19.9
Threatening teacher	18.8	58.3	8.3	0	14.6

In response to what they evaluate as the most serious pseudo conflicts, teachers use what they estimate to be as the most severe response which is a Behavior Disciplinary Report. Teachers use this response when they are threatened (58.3%), receive insults (51.1%), have a confrontation with a student (63.5%) or when they witness xenophobic behavior (50.0%).

On the other hand, with less serious pseudo conflicts, teachers usually use a verbal reprimand. Thus 65% of teachers use this sanction when students go repeatedly to the toilet, 69.2 % if students are late to class, 69.4 % when students are eating in the classroom and 74.6 % for pushing when.

A simple comparison in pairs using a correlation analysis facilitates a comparison between the assessments that teachers and students made of these pseudo conflicts (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation of teacher-student opinions (simple comparison peer).

Variables Correlated	T value	Sig.
Peer 1. Poor hygiene (T)-Poor hygiene (S)	-2.586	0.012
Peer 2. Escape (T)-Escape (S)	-3.360	0.001
Peer 3. Truancy (T) - Avoiding class (S)	-6.019	0.000
Peer 4. Disobeying (T)-Disobeying regulate (S)	-3.632	0.000
Peer 5. Disrespect (T) - Disrespect (S)	-2.973	0.004
Peer 6. Head (T) - Facing the teacher (S)	-3.206	0.002
Peer 7. Threatening (T) - Threatening the teacher (S)	2.632	0.010
Peer 8. Insulting (T) - Insulting the teacher (S)	-2.642	0.010
Peer 9. Fighting (T) - Fighting with peers (S)	-5.088	0.000
Peer 10. Noises (T) - Noises and cries (S)	0.944	0.347
Peer 11. Spoiling furniture (T) – Spoiling furniture (S)	5.030	0.000
Peer 12. Throwing things (T) - Throwing things (S)	7.027	0.000
Peer 13. Spoiling furniture (T) - Spoiling material (S)	8.265	0.000
Peer 14. Eating (T) - Eating (S)	4.918	0.000
Peer 15. Listening to music (T) - Listening to music (S)	8.721	0.000
Peer 16. Shuffle (T) - Shuffle standards (S)	-13.866	0.000
Peer 17. Playing (T) - Playing (S)	7.256	0.000
Peer 18. Order not to leave (T) - Shuffle (S)	4.833	0.000
Peer 19. Interrupting (T) - Interrupting the teacher (S)	-4.196	0.000
Peer 20. Board Professor (T) - Board Professor (S)	3.099	0.003
Peer 21. Insulting (T) - Insulting the teacher (S)	-46.868	0.000
Peer 22. Disrespect (T) - Disrespect (S)	-4.533	0.000
Peer 23. Removing item (T) – Removing material co (S)	-1.834	0.070
Peer 24. Discussing (T) - Discussing with peers (S)	-6.064	0.000
Peer 25. Sexist behaviors (T) - Showing sexist behavior (S)	-1.633	0.106
Peer 26. Forgetting duties (T) - Forgetting material (S)	1.815	0.072
Peer 27. Avoiding working (T) - Avoiding work (S)	5.036	0.000
Peer 28. Explanation Pass (T) - Board Professor (S)	4.596	0.000
Peer 29. Talking in class (T) - Talking while you are explaining (SA)	-3.532	0.001
Peer 30. Xenophobic behavior (T) - Xenophobic behavior (S)	0.695	0.489
Peer 31. Forgetting duties (T) - Forgetting duties (S)	3.514	0.001

(T): Teachers (S): Students

The data in Table 2 show that the opinions of teachers and students about pseudo conflicts are closely related in most of the cases. Only a few pseudo conflicts, such as making noise (sig. 0.347), sexist behavior (sig. 0.106), forgetting homework (sig. 0.072) and xenophobic behavior (0.489) are not rated similarly by students and teachers.

4. Conclusions

Although students and teachers agree when assessing serious pseudo conflicts like insulting, threatening and confrontation, they do not agree on other items. Other instances, which were assessed by teachers to be serious, such as disrespect and , sexist or xenophobic behaviors were only consider to be moderately serious by students.

A few minor items indicate this disagreement as well. For example, lack of respect amongst peers when they are working in the classroom is a serious behavior for teachers, but not for students. On the other hand a moderated discussion is a serious conflict for students, which is positively valued by teachers as the right technique to improve the students' learning process.

The majority of teachers use the Disciplinary Behavior Report to resolve conflicts with no differentiation between latent conflict and pseudo conflicts. A verbal reprimand is the most common sanction used by teachers for behaviors against peaceful coexistence. They usually maintain alertness to intercultural conflicts, because they consider them to be latent conflicts. However, sometimes teachers do not pay enough attention to these conflicts, until a problem turns into a fight, a confrontation or lack of communication which could have been resolved easily prior to a crisis (Cascón, 2009). In most cases pseudo conflicts are not really solved by applying a temporary or partial solution. This is because conflict resolution needs to be repeated several times, distorting and gradually worsening the climate of intercultural coexistence.

Both teachers and students have closely matched opinions about most pseudo conflicts, but disagree on some items related with latent conflicts which one based on deep seated values, such as xenophobic or sexist attitudes.

All this suggests that teachers' thinking and their skills about how to resolve pseudo conflicts ought to be improved and reinforced. The best techniques to achieve these aims are all those that facilitate coexistence: Assemblies where teachers, students and families deal with conflict as a way to achieve consensus through negotiation; intercultural mediation strategies between different sectors of the educational community; cultural proximity and a respectful educational approach; integration of teacher's opinion and ideas on programmes designed to attend to cultural diversity; avoiding unequal relations and the use of a common language; adopting a constructive and social vision of conflict to be solved through dialogue in groups or to encourage empathy training to address and resolve conflicts of different types .

Only a change of intercultural perception, an open-minded educational perspective and the use of new procedures (Gutierrez, 1999) will help us to facilitate the hybridization of school culture.

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